

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2009

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
H-128 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

In 1971, President Richard Nixon initiated the war against cancer with the signing of the National Cancer Act. Nearly four decades later, we continue to wage battle against not one disease and one cure, but more than 200 types of cancer with the possibility of infinite individualized cures and treatments. Now is the time to renew our government's federal commitment to find a cure in our time, a pledge that is shared by President Barack Obama.

Thanks to strong research programs created by Congress, the average five-year survival rate for all cancers is now 66 percent, and there are even a few cancers for which survival is more than 80 percent. While for each cancer there are significant areas of research to pursue, the greatest challenges remain for those cancers with the highest mortality rates. In fact, *half* of the 565,650 cancer deaths expected in 2008 will be caused by eight forms of cancer with five-year survival rates of less than 50 percent: ovarian (45%); brain (35%); myeloma (35%); stomach (24%); esophageal (16%); lung (15%); liver (11%); and pancreatic (5%). Part of the problem is that there has historically been little research focused on these cancers; a problem that has been further compounded due to the recent decreasing National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute (NCI) budgets.

We ask the Appropriations Subcommittee for Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies (LHHSE) to commit to doubling the budget of the NCI over the next five years by increasing NCI funding to \$6 billion in FY 2010, an increase of 20 percent over FY 2009. Even at this level, our request is still more than \$1 billion less than what the NCI has requested in its FY 2010 professional judgment budget request. We are supportive of the NCI request, yet sensitive to the Subcommittee's challenge to do more with fewer resources.

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Investing in medical research should be viewed as a critical component of any health system reform effort. Clinical trials provide the basis for informed health care decision making by our country's health care providers. When health care professionals provide evidence-based care, patient quality improves and cost savings become possible. Our investment in cancer research begins with the positive impact it will have on our fight against cancer and extends to our state and local economies, while indirectly aiding efforts to improve health care quality, efficiency and affordability.

For all the progress we have made, we still lack a solid grip on the basic science of cancer. We are at a real turning point for cancer research, but whether we actually turn that corner will depend on available resources. As you develop FY 2010 appropriations legislation, we ask that you consider the wide-ranging positive impact of a \$6 billion allocation to the NCI. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,


Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress


